

Content Analysis for Postgraduate Theses Related to Teaching Turkish in the Balkan Countries*

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Abstract. It is aimed to examine the research trends of the postgraduate theses on the Turkish language education and teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries i.e. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and Greece in this study. This study was carried out using descriptive content analysis, which is one of the content analysis methods. In the study, data were collected through document analysis. The sample of the research consists of postgraduate theses which were published in the YÖK (Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu) Thesis Center and on the Turkish language education and teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries. 26 different postgraduate theses which can be sampled have been determined for this purpose. The theses sampled were subjected to an analysis under the themes of country, year of preparation, distribution of doctoral or master's theses, university, subject areas, and method. Descriptive content analysis was applied in the analysis of the acquired data. It has been seen that these theses are related to 7 Balkan countries i.e. Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Romania, and Greece as a result of the study. Any studies related to Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia from other Balkan countries were not found. Most of the postgraduate studies are related to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. 26 postgraduate theses were prepared between 2003 and 2021. 22 of the postgraduate studies are at the master's level, and 4 of them are at the doctoral level. Mostly qualitative research design was used in the examined theses. It is observed that postgraduate studies have been conducted in 12 universities on teaching Turkish related to the Balkan countries in Turkey. The largest number of postgraduate studies were conducted at Gazi University among these universities. The subjects discussed in the theses on teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries are discussed under 14 subject titles. Writing skill was discussed more intensively in terms of subject frequency. It can be suggested that results of the theses covering the subjects of needs analysis and perception-view based upon teaching Turkish should be examined by Turkish governmental institutions teaching Turkish in these countries, and Turkish teaching policies should be updated based upon the results.

Keywords: Turkish, Balkan countries, teaching, foreign language, postgraduate thesis.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Turkish is a language spoken actively in a wide geography, and one of the prominent is Balkans. The Balkans is in the southeastern part of Europe. It covers the Adriatic to the west, the Dardanelles, Istanbul Strait (Bosphorus), Marmara Sea and Black Sea to the east, Danube-Sava rivers, to the north, and a wide geography up to Mediterranean Sea to the south (Karpát, 1992). Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Slovenia, Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece are located in this geography.

The name “Balkan” is of Turkish origin and means “mountainous region”. It was named as “Balkan” at the beginning of the 19th century (Bozkurt, 2010). The oldest inhabitants of the Balkans are Illyrians. The Romans captured the Balkans in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. The first Turkic raids were done by the Huns. The Huns appeared in Europe and the Balkans in 380. Afterwards, Pechenegs, Cumans (Kipchaks), and Uz Turks migrated to the Balkans in the 11th and 12th centuries, and lived. Turks conquered Edirne in 1361 by moving to the Balkan Peninsula through Gallipoli in 1354. Serbia came under Turkish dominance after the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, Turkish dominance in the Balkans consolidated during the reign of Bayezid I (the Thunderbolt). Mehmed II (the Conqueror) conquered Bosnia in 1463 and the Balkans came under domination of the Ottoman Empire (Karpát, 1992). Ottoman presence in the Balkans lasted approximately 500 years. Ottoman political administration shaped the history and culture in this geography during this process, but Turkish dominance came to an end after Russian advance on the Balkans in the last quarter of the 19th century, and followingly the Balkan Wars after loss of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878. Balkan nations established independent countries with other countries’ support. Turks living there became citizens of those countries and minority after those countries were established (Yavuz, 2019; Kunt, 2000). The importance of the Balkans is not limited to the region's geopolitical and geostrategic importance but also the Balkans being under Turkish dominance for years has been a region having historical, social and cultural ties with Turkey (Orhun Çalık, 2020). Particularly, the language being an essential transfer tool of culture, Turkish language and Turkish education have a strategic importance for the region.

Turkish language was used in state affairs and daily life as a communication tool among the societies in the region from 15th century to 20th century due to the Ottoman Empire’s dominant power in the region. Influence of Turkish language weakened after the fall of the Ottoman Empire (Artun, 2013). Turkish education confronted some problems in the Balkans (Hüseyinoğlu, 2015). Protecting Turkish language presence has an importance because Turks living in the Balkans encountered the languages of the countries they live as second languages, those countries’ languages became their native languages and Turkish became second language in time. Familiarity of the future generations with Turkish language weakened (Yavuz, 2019). Turkish began to revive owing to established

Turkology departments in the region in the Republican Turkish era, and Yunus Emre Institutions, works of TİKA, and Turkish series also. Therefore, awareness of data about Turkish teaching-oriented scientific studies in the region should be expanded. Accordingly, the distribution of the studies conducted in the Balkan countries on teaching Turkish by country, and the other variables of these studies need to be examined.

There are various studies related to postgraduate theses in the field of teaching Turkish to foreigners in the literature. Büyükkız (2014) examined the postgraduate theses prepared in the field of teaching Turkish to foreigners by years, study types, subjects, methods, and language skills. The postgraduate theses conducted in the field of teaching Turkish to foreigners were examined in terms of similar variables in Ercan (2014). Çelebi et al. (2019) did a meta-analysis study on the postgraduate theses carried out in the field of teaching Turkish to foreigners in Turkey. Sevim and Özdemir Erem (2012) confined it to titles and abstracts variables of the theses in the study related to the master's theses in the field of Turkish education, and presented a critical study. A similar study can be observed in the study of Küçük and Kaya (2018) as well. A content analysis on keywords in theses carried out in this study. Göçer and Moğul (2011) did not include postgraduate theses in the studies related to teaching Turkish as a foreign language. In the study of Maden and Önal (2021), being a current study, research trends of postgraduate theses are examined. Another current study belongs to Erol (2021). Erol made an evaluation on vocabulary and vocabulary teaching in the theses related to teaching Turkish as a foreign language between 1981 and 2021.

In the field of postgraduate theses in teaching Turkish to foreigners; dissemination of theses according to year, type, subject, methods, language skills in general. In addition, the titles and core contents of the theses were criticized and their keywords were analyzed. Vocabulary and course teaching were also evaluated in theses. However, in these theses, no variable was found about which countries the Balkan countries taught in Turkish knew. It will provide an overview of the Balkan countries to circumvent this license variant. Therefore, we can predict that this study has an original value in the field. As a result, in this study, various postgraduate theses related to teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries are examined in terms of various variables, and accordingly research questions below are tried to be answered:

- a) What is the distribution of postgraduate theses on teaching Turkish in Balkan countries according to the countries in which they are made?
- b) What is the distribution of postgraduate theses on teaching Turkish in Balkan countries according to their writing years?
- c) What is the distribution of postgraduate theses on teaching Turkish in Balkan countries according to the type of thesis?
- d) What is the distribution of postgraduate theses on teaching Turkish in Balkan countries according to the universities where they were made?

- e) What is the distribution of postgraduate theses on teaching Turkish in Balkan countries according to their subjects?
- f) What is the distribution of postgraduate theses on teaching Turkish in Balkan countries according to their method?

2. METHOD

This study was carried out using descriptive content analysis, which is one of the content analysis methods. In the descriptive analysis technique, the data are summarized and interpreted within the scope of previously determined themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In the study, data were collected through document analysis. Either reviewing the documents in general is carried out or numericizing some features of the selected document is aimed (Karasar, 2005). For this purpose, descriptive analysis was preferred in the study in order to reveal the trend in the postgraduate theses related to Turkish teaching in Balkan countries in terms of various variables.

Materials

26 theses in the national thesis database of Council of Higher Education of Turkey are examined. It is found that 24 of them are available while 2 of them are restricted by their authors. The restricted theses are tried to be benefitted from their abstracts. The main aim is not to pass a judgment on the universe by taking a study group but to get information on a specific subject and to present information to researchers who will study on the subject.

Collecting Analyzing Data

Document analysis technique is used during collecting data for the research. The theses were fetched from the thesis database of Council of Higher Education of Turkey between July 1st, 2022 and July 10th 2022. These theses were obtained after searching the keywords "Turkish in the Balkans, the Balkan countries, Teaching Turkish in the Balkans". The theses included in the sample group were subjected to analysis under the themes of country, publication year, distribution of doctor's and master's degree, university, subject area, and method themes. The data acquired were analyzed by two experts by content analysis. Conclusions are compared as a result of two experts' analyses, it is found and most of the results overlap. Distinctive analysis conclusions were not included in the study after a consensus. The data acquired are presented in tables as frequency (f), and commented.

3. FINDINGS

Findings on the distribution of postgraduate theses on teaching Turkish in Balkan countries according to the countries where they were made: Table 1 shows the countries where the postgraduate theses on teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries, expressed in

the first sub-problem of the research, were made, and the frequency values of the theses belonging to each country.

Numerical results of distribution of theses on teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries by countries are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of Theses by Country

Country	f
Albania	1
Bosnia-Herzegovina	7
Bulgaria	2
Croatia	-
Montenegro	-
Kosovo	7
North Macedonia	4
Romania	3
Serbia	-
Slovenia	-
Greece	2
Total	26

It is seen that the largest number of theses was carried out in Bosnia-Herzegovina ($f=7$), and Kosovo ($f=7$), the second one is North Macedonia ($f=4$) while there are no studies in Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia.

Findings regarding the distribution of postgraduate theses on teaching Turkish in Balkan countries by year of writing: Table 2 shows the distribution and frequency values of postgraduate theses made on teaching Turkish in Balkan countries, which is the second sub-problem of the research, according to the year of writing.

Numerical results of distribution of theses on teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries by years are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Distribution of Theses by Years

Year	f
2003	1
2005	2
2011	2
2012	1
2013	2
2014	1
2015	4
2016	2
2017	2
2019	2
2020	2
2021	5
Total	26

It is found that the studies are carried out between 2003 and 2021 when Table 2 is examined. The largest number of theses was conducted in 2015 (f=4) and 2021 (f=5). Except 2003 and 2014, each of the years has at least a thesis study.

Findings on the distribution of postgraduate theses on teaching Turkish in Balkan countries by thesis type: Table 3 shows the distribution of postgraduate theses on teaching Turkish in Balkan countries by thesis type and the frequency values of theses.

Numerical results of distribution of theses on teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries by study types are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Distribution of Theses by Study Type

Distribution of Theses by Study Type	f
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Master's Theses	22
Doctoral Theses	4
Total	26

Research data show that there are 22 master's and 4 doctoral theses on teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries. There are a limited number of doctoral studies in proportion to master's studies.

Findings on the distribution of postgraduate theses on Turkish teaching in Balkan countries according to the universities where they were made: Table 3 shows the distribution of postgraduate theses on Turkish teaching in Balkan countries according to the universities where they were made and the frequency values showing how many times they were made in universities.

Numerical results of distribution of theses on teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries by universities are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Distribution of Theses by Universities

University	f
Ankara University	1
Balıkesir University	1
Bartın University	1
Bursa Uludağ University	2
Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University	2
Fırat University	1
Gazi University	9
Hacettepe University	3
Istanbul University	4
Kırıkkale University	1
Ondokuz Mayıs University	1
Total	26

When Table 4 is examined, it is observed that there are 12 universities where postgraduate studies on the subject of teaching Turkish language related to the Balkan countries are carried out in Turkey. Of all these universities, the largest number of postgraduate studies was carried out in Gazi University (f=9). The universities where more than one thesis studies were completed are Istanbul University (f=4), Hacettepe University (f=3), Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University (f=2), and Bursa Uludağ University (f=2).

Findings on the distribution of postgraduate theses on Turkish teaching in Balkan countries according to their topics: Table 5 shows the distribution of theses made on Turkish teaching in Balkan countries according to their topics and the frequency values of the topics.

Numerical results of distribution of theses on teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries by the subjects are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Distribution of Theses by the Subjects

Thesis Subject	f
Textbook Evaluation	2
Teaching Grammar	1
Speaking Skill	2
Culture Transfer	1
Reading Skill	1
Vocabulary	2
Turkish Education	1
Turkish Curriculums	1
Turkish Teaching Method	1
History of Teaching Turkish	3
Determining Success Level in Teaching Turkish	1
View-Perception in Teaching Turkish	3
Needs Analysis in Teaching Turkish	3
Writing Skill	4
Total	26

The subjects which postgraduate theses in the field of teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries are collected under 14 categories. It is observed that subjects of the postgraduate theses were conducted in the field of writing skill (f=4) at most. The studies about Needs Analysis in Teaching Turkish (f=3), View-Perception in Teaching Turkish (f=3), and History of Teaching Turkish (f=3) were conducted to a certain extent.

Findings on the distribution of postgraduate theses on teaching Turkish in Balkan countries by method: Table 6 shows the distribution of postgraduate theses on teaching Turkish in Balkan countries according to their method and the frequency values showing the frequency of the methods.

Numerical results of distribution of theses on teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries by research designs are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Distribution of Theses by Research Designs

Thesis Method	f
Qualitative Method	14
Quantitative Method	9
Mixed Method	3
Total	26

When Table 6 is examined, it is observed that the qualitative method (f=14) is used at most while mixed method (f=3) is the least used method.

4. RESULTS, DISCUSSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Turkish is trying to survive in the Balkans. The presence of dominant elements in the Balkan geography affects the Balkan Turks and alienates them from their identities. This separation is mostly in their mother tongue (Gökdağ, 2012; Açık & Yavuz, 2019). Based on the views of the Turks living there, the opinion that learning Turkish in the international arena would be beneficial for them (Yavuz & Açık, 2020). These data reveal the importance of Turkish teaching in the Balkan geography. In line with this importance, the following results were obtained in this study:

It is found that there are 26 postgraduate theses prepared on teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries. These theses are related to 7 Balkan countries i.e. Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Romania, Greece. Any other studies related to other Balkan countries i.e. Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia were not found. The largest number of studies is related to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.

26 theses aforementioned were prepared between 2003 and 2021. There is no study between 2005 and 2011, which can be associated with the fact that Turkish teaching centers were just established and postgraduate programs at universities were not adequate. Each of the years from 2011 to 2021, 1 postgraduate study was completed on average. The largest number of studies were conducted in 2021. It is possible to say the studies on teaching Turkish to foreigners in the Balkans increased from the point of the study.

22 of the postgraduate theses are master's theses, and 4 of them are doctoral theses. 4 doctoral theses are on Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Greece; 2 of them are on North Macedonia. 3 of the doctoral theses were conducted in Gazi University, and 1 of them in Ankara was conducted University. According to the data, it is found that master's theses are more prioritized, and doctoral theses have lower rates relatively in the field of teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries. These theses are conducted mostly with qualitative research design. Studies with mixed methods are limited.

It is observed that there are 12 universities where postgraduate studies on the subject of teaching Turkish language related to the Balkan countries are carried out in Turkey. Of all these universities, the largest number of postgraduate studies was carried out in Gazi University. The largest number of theses at the postgraduate level in the field of teaching Turkish as a foreign language was conducted in Gazi University as well (Türkben, 2018). The studies were conducted to some extent in Istanbul University and Hacettepe University, and each of the other universities has a study.

The subjects discussed in theses on teaching Turkish in the Balkan countries are discussed under 14 subject titles. writing skill, being one of the four skills, is the primary subject. There are a limited number of theses that discuss reading and speaking skills. These findings are consistent with those of Muzaffer & Çevik (2021). It has been determined that very few keywords related to speaking skills are included in the study on the keywords that passed through the master's theses written in the field of teaching Turkish as a foreign language. The subject of the theses, which is another subject of the related study, overlaps with the subject headings determined in our study. Also, any theses discussing listening skill were not found. Particularly, the studies being related to speaking skills prioritizing language learning are weighed, which may shed light on researchers to show the position of Turkish language in social life.

Results of the theses, which are the subjects of needs analysis in teaching Turkish and view-perception in teaching Turkish, are analyzed by researchers, and content of the teaching Turkish language policies in these regions can be clarified, because Turkish is under threat especially in Bulgaria and Greece due to various reasons (Açık and Yavuz, 2019). The theses which discuss vocabulary have significant results for being studies aimed at preserving Turkish vocabulary.

Suggestions

Doctoral studies should be given more space while considering domains in postgraduate theses studies. The Balkan countries where any studies were not conducted before should be considered in the postgraduate theses to be conducted in the field of teaching Turkish language related to Balkan countries. Different dimensions of the basic language skills can be discussed in the theses to be conducted.

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